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FM AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7479

INFO RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB IMMEDIATE 2415

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000280

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE AND EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2019

TAGS: PREL EUN HR SI

SUBJECT: SLOVENIAN PRIME MINISTER: "WE HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT WITH CROATIA"

REF: LJUBLJANA 275

Classified By: CDA Brad Freden, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) In a one-on-one meeting September 9, Slovenian PM Pahor told CDA that he and Croatian PM Kosor had reached agreement on the way forward regarding the border dispute and Croatia's EU accession. He said Kosor would travel to Ljubljana, perhaps as early as September 11, to sign the letter to the Swedish Presidency that would put an immediate end to Slovenia's blockade of Croatia's EU accession talks.

Pahor did not go into the details of the agreement, but indicated that it was essentially what he had previewed with EUR DAS Stu Jones in Slovenia on August 30 (reftel). Saying that he and Kosor had agreed to coordinate the timing of their announcements, he asked that we exercise maximum discretion to avoid any leak to the news media in Ljubljana or Zagreb. It appears that Pahor informed us before either the Commission or the Swedish Presidency.

¶2. (C) Pahor said he would meet September 10 with former PM Janez Jansa, now the leader of the largest opposition party in parliament, to brief him on the agreement and ask for his support. Pahor sees the agreement as win-win and will present it as such in his campaign for ratification, but he emphasized that he must have Jansa on board. CDA told Pahor that we had already requested a meeting with Jansa to talk about this and other foreign policy priorities, and that we would convey our unequivocal support for the agreement. CDA will tell Jansa that we would be deeply distressed by any effort on the part of the &responsible opposition8 to politicize this issue. FM Zbogar will brief the Swedish Presidency September 10.

¶3. (C) Pahor framed the agreement in terms of Slovenia's interest in seeing the process of EU and NATO enlargement go forward. He said he was willing to take short-term political risks to avoid potential instability in the Western Balkans. In this context, he said that he hoped the agreement between Slovenia and Croatia could serve as a template for resolving similar border disputes (sic) between Croatia and other ex-Yugoslav republics seeking membership in NATO and/or the EU. In closing, Pahor asked for our (and the EU's) strong public support for the agreement. "Both sides," he said, "will need strong international support to convince a skeptical public" that the agreement is indeed win-win. CDA undertook to obtain a supportive statement from Washington when the agreement is signed, congratulated Pahor for his leadership and urged the PM to get in touch with him if there were any last-minute glitches.

¶4. (C) COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST: If indeed an agreement is signed, it will be a tribute to the political courage of both

Prime Ministers. We ask that Washington consider a high-level congratulatory call to both PMs, ideally from the President. While we realize that such calls are a scarce commodity, we believe a call from the President would provide the decisive support Pahor needs to push this agreement through parliament and prevail against a likely effort by opponents to submit the agreement to a referendum.

FREDEN